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Who Are You, Class of 2008

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Who Are You – 2005

I thought it would be appropriate, this morning, to tell you, and the faculty, who you, the Class of 2008 are. Can you guess who is who? Well – you've got the next three years to find out!

From the great state of Hawaii to Maine, big cities and rural areas, you've come to us from twenty-five states and the District of Columbia, Canada and France. One of you is a citizen of Kenya.

Forty-two percent of this entering class is female. This class's average age is nearly 24 ½ - about the same as last year. Eighteen of you are married (at least at the time of your application) – two of you to each other - and quite a few of you have children. One of you returned from his honeymoon the night before Orientation. You come from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Two of you have grandfathers who graduated from this law school; one is the third generation of men in his family to attend this wonderful place.

Applications were received this year from applicants in 13 countries. While over 2200 graduates of 475 US colleges and 14 foreign countries applied to this Law School, seventy-two Universities (5 more than last year) are represented in this particular class. One of you graduated from a Canadian University. Eight of you have advanced degrees – one with a PhD in Organic Chemistry.

One hundred and eight or 63% of you have been out of college for at least one year – one of you graduated in 1974. Your median LSAT score of 161 places you in the top 15% of the 435,098 test takers during the last three years (10,772 *more* test takers when compared to last year).

The top quarter of your class achieved an LSAT of 163 which places them in the top 10% of all test takers over the same period. Can you believe that the bottom quartile of this class (in terms of LSAT score) actually scored 160 which is in the top 18% of these same test takers? This class brings to the Law School the third highest median GPA in our school's 135 year history (sorry, last year's class eclipsed you by one hundredth of a point.) The top quartile of your class has a GPA of 3.53; your median GPA is 3.29. The bottom quartile of the class in terms of GPA is 3.10.

One of you achieved a perfect 4.0; fifty of you have a GPA of 3.5 or above. Fifty different majors are represented with the greatest number – 42 graduating in – no surprise – Political Science. Several of you are engineers – one a biomedical engineer. Twenty-three graduated with Latin Honors and two were inducted in Phi Beta Kappa. Forty-seven of you had undergrad scholarships, some several. You represent membership in a variety of prestigious honor societies. Eight have attained the rank of Eagle Scout. Eleven of you are John Marshall Scholars.

Many of you have traveled extensively, lived, worked, done mission trips and studied all over the world. You are fluent in Arabic, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian, Hungarian, Italian and German. Several of you are dedicated EMTs and give many, many hours in emergency service. Some of you have served our country in the armed forces – one of you was awarded the Navy Commendation Medal for exemplary service while serving as an infantry officer in the first Gulf war. A couple of you have been trained in chemical warfare and several hold security clearances designated, “top secret” and “secret”.

You’ve had some pretty amazing careers pre law school. Can you believe thirty of you have been paralegals or legal assistants? Many of you have been teachers – not just in the classroom but as tutors to inner city children, teaching children to ride horses, teaching English as a second language both in foreign countries and at home – and as an NRA certified pistol instructor. One of you helped to collect and compile data from Alzheimer’s patients. One of you wrote about a mission trip where he “slept on hay, ate raw cow stomach on a daily basis and contracted salmonella”. I don’t envy your classmate who worked in a salmon cannery in Southeast Alaska 14 hours a day. You might get some great tips from the fellow in your class who had paralegal responsibility for supervising the collection and filing of exhibits for one of the largest liability cases in US history. One of you has been working as an applied behavior analyst therapist doing behavioral therapy with an autistic child and another planned and completed a project to remove “social trails” which were damaging the environment. One of you has been working as a Historical Interpreter at Monticello. Someone amongst you is a technical photographer with expertise in photographing metal – he photographed automotive crash tests for nearly 3 years and has had editorial photographs published in several magazines and another is a home improvement contractor. I suspect the woman in your class who has served as President of a Health Management company who moved her company from a start up with 5 employees to a market leader with more than \$60 million in revenue and nearly 400 employees in multi-state operations will have a great deal to share in class and out. I know the faculty will want to meet the student in this class who already has 3 patents for his work with a 4th patent pending.

Politics seem to entice a great many of you with you demonstrating your interest by working on political campaigns and being members of the staffs of Congressmen and Senators. Legislative aides, judicial interns, senate interns – lots of you have made your political mark. I had to laugh when reading one of your narrative statements in which one of you confided that with great difficulty you had to “come out to your parents” and admit to being...a Democrat.

Your interests and talents are varied and you are accomplished in so many areas. One of you is currently the principal bassoonist with the Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic, several of you are award winning debaters; another is the spokesperson for the Pink Pistols and has been interviewed by Time magazine; several of you are published; one of you grew up without a shower which taught her to be flexible and to know there are multiple ways to accomplish things. So many of you have won awards for a wide variety of things – one of you even scored a perfect score on the SATII – and another won an

Emmy for producing a television show. One of you has been to over 40 countries in the last 4 years having such adventures as meeting Fidel Castro and sailing up the Saigon River while having a barbeque with 600 kids. One of you was the California Cherry Blossom Princess and one of you is a Wiccan. Another studied at the Wooden Boat School to learn the art of wood and canvas boat restoration.

You have a serious commitment to public service. One of you wrote: “Through public service and public interest law, democracy and justice go hand in hand” another put this perspective on public service: “One could argue that to embark on a career in law absent motives of public service is somewhat like the old adage of trying to teach a pig to sing: it wastes your time and annoys the pig”. You all put your money where your mouth is by giving thousands of hours working with the abused, infirm and elderly, in soup kitchens, shelters and with crisis hotlines. You’ve worked countless hours in hospices, teaching the disadvantaged; distributing food to the needy, raising funds and volunteering for hundreds of charities. You adopt orphans for Christmas, coach children in sports you love, and volunteer in hospitals. You commit yourselves to helping not only those disadvantaged at home but seek to help those less fortunate in foreign countries as well. Those of you who have given so much of yourselves are surely our hope for the future!

Excitement isn’t missing from your lives. Many of you have played at the varsity level in baseball, golf, crew, swimming and tennis. One of you was offered a pro soccer contract. Ninjutsu, lacrosse, riding, squash, waterskiing, and fly fishing – you’ve done it all. Another of your classmates, a competitive gymnast for 15 years, actually broke her school balance beam record on two different occasions. One of you has literally saved a life and another had *his* life saved as a result of someone else’s generosity in allowing an organ transplant. I suspect the SBA will pay me to find out who you are – yes - you who studied bartending at a school devoted to bottle-flipping and special techniques.

Again this year I’ve been struck to so often see words such as “integrity, commitment, honesty, public interest, ethics, and loyalty permeate your narrative statements. I’ve been thrilled to see that the reasons so many of you have chosen to go to law school remain the altruistic desire to contribute to making our world a better place to be...to make a difference.....to contribute to mankind. So many of you are survivors and have dealt with life’s difficult sides – tragic deaths of loved ones, divorce, terrible car accidents, debilitating illnesses, dissolution of families, even murder.

Yet, you endure and strive to be better. You don’t give up. One of you wrote, “The choices are out there staring you in the face. When it all boils down, all one can hope for is when the big ones come around, you will look back on them with satisfaction and not regret”.

I could go on and on telling you tidbits...or factoids as they’re sometimes called...about your class. There are 171 stories amongst you and all of them shed light on your personalities, hopes and dreams. But, half the fun of being in this law school is getting to know those who are going to become your life-long friends so I’ll stop now and wish you good luck and good fun on the adventure upon which you are now embarking.